1. **If the project received funding for broadband planning, please describe progress made against all goals, objectives, and milestones detailed in the approved project plan. Be sure to include a description of each major activity/milestone that you plan to complete and your current status. (Answer below.)**

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. UNL is the fiscal agent for the planning part of the grant.

A number of activities were identified in the initial grant to identify barriers to the adoption of broadband and IT services, creating and facilitating local technology planning teams, and collaborating with broadband service providers to encourage broadband deployment and use. In the supplemental grant, activities were focused around three projects: capacity building, technical assistance and local planning. Following the NITA guidance and recent Webinar recommendation, the quarterly report will focus on the three project areas.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: A Household Survey – initial and follow-up.

Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future through a survey conducted by UNL. The survey was mailed to 6,600 Nebraskans in February 2010 and achieved a 47% response rate. The report, available at broadband.nebraska.gov, highlights regional, education, income, age, gender, racial and ethnic group comparisons. Key findings identified include the following example:

> *Approximately four out of every five households (81%) in Nebraska has internet service. However, older persons, persons with lower household incomes, persons with lower education levels, households without children, and households in the nonmetropolitan areas of the state are the groups less likely to have Internet service in their home.*

A follow-up survey of households will be conducted in 2014 (Year 5 of grant) to document changes in Internet and broadband use since the initial survey. Regions that were originally identified as either unserved or underserved in the initial survey will be over-sampled in this follow-up survey.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update. Initial survey results continue to be reviewed by regional planning teams. The follow up survey is planned for Quarter 2, 2014.*

Business Survey

Businesses will be surveyed through the Department of Economic Development's Business Retention and Expansion program to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. To develop the statewide plan, over 1000 businesses will be included in the database as communities and regions have the capability to gather information from all types of businesses including retail, health care and services. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. Additional questions will be developed that relate specifically to future opportunities. The data will be pulled together and themes will be developed.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*:   Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data has been gathered from over 400 key businesses. Twenty three communities currently hold a license to input data in eSynchronist; three of these communities received grants to begin using eSynchronist in Quarter 4 2011. A separate broadband survey was implemented to businesses across Nebraska late Quarter 4, 2011.

Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs. In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. Results will be shared with project partners, regional teams and be available on the broadband portal.

> *4rd Quarter 2011 Status Update*. Initial scans have been completed. Will continue to gather information on broadband and digital literacy programs. During the 1st Quarter 2012, will begin exploring how best to share and maintain information.

Focused Surveys. Focused surveys in regions where there are large numbers of non-adopters will help to better understand how to increase broadband adoption. The surveys will be conducted in specific counties, regions and in some parts of metropolitan areas where usage appears to be lower and will provide these areas with data specific to them that can be used to develop a plan that addresses their future needs. The surveys will also create local benchmark data that will help determine if broadband adoption increases in these areas over time.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update.* Work continues with the cultural coach to connect to specific populations. Regional groups will also help to identify potential areas to benchmark. Initial surveys in topical areas such as agriculture will begin in February 2012.

Government and Economic Developer Survey. To gather information on access, adoption, usage, and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce, and for economic developers, a survey (web-based where feasible) of all entities will be conducted. This information will support the development of regional and community technology plans and will be used to develop targeted technical assistance for local governments and economic developers.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update. Initial list of questions were identified in Q4. Beginning to review questions and clarify specific groups to target for survey. Goal of conducting on-line survey to targeted organizations (i.e., Nebraska Economic Development Association) during late Quarter 1 2012 or early Quarter 2.

Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative – To meet the objectives of the grant, the broadband planning oversight team meets on a bi-monthly basis.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update: PSC representatives joined the every other week meetings during 2011. The planning team now meets quarterly with entire PSC team and provides an official report to the Public Service Commissioners at regularly scheduled meetings. The Planning team will be meeting with the new mapping partner in first quarter 2012.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Three cross-training efforts were identified in the Supplemental Application to address broadband adoption and utilization. These efforts outlined below are the Statewide Conference, Regional Workshops and Webinars.

Statewide Conference. The statewide conference will be focused on broadband adoption and utilization will bring together many industries including those working in economic development, telecommunications industry, education, state government, and local government personnel.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update: The AIM Institute provided leadership in this effort and the planning is moving forward. During this quarter:

- Broadband Connecting Nebraska conference held November 1, 2011 at the Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln
- Over 140 attendees from across Nebraska
- 93% rated the conference as informative/very informative and 88% are likely or very likely to attend another broadband conference
- Plans underway for the 2012 to be held October 2, 2012.

Regional Workshops. Regional workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update: Regional workshops will begin 2012. The Western Region is currently working on a workshop that will be held in the Spring 2012.

Webinars. Up to four webinars will be held each year to address broadband adoption and utilization. Topics may include how to set up community planning groups to sharing results of the various data collections, processes and best practices.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update: Webinars began in 3rd Quarter 2011. The sessions have highlighted various opportunities occurring in Nebraska Network Nebraska, a collaborative effort to share telecommunications resources, network services, and

applications. Over 40 individuals have participated in each of the sessions that began in September. Nearly 100% are planning to attend future webinars. The sessions are held monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of each month and are archived at broadband.nebraska.gov. The 1st Quarter 2012 webinars and dates are:

- January 18 – NebraskaLink – Linking you to the World
- February 15 - Health Information Exchange and Healthcare Transformation, What Does It Mean to Nebraskans?
- March 21 - Tablet Integration in a Small Business Environment

Best Practice Videos. One way to expand broadband adoption across Nebraska is to learn from communities, businesses and other organizations who are the early adopters and "get it." This project initiative will identify at least 20 examples of best practices throughout Nebraska and conduct video interviews with key players. These individuals will be asked to describe the essential elements of their success. Each interview will be edited and compiled onto the broadband portal resource from which other communities can learn.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Criteria has been established for video candidates, including geographic and organizational diversity. A preliminary list of candidates has been identified. In addition to identify ways that individuals are using broadband, a request for nominations for best practices is being created and will be distributed in Q1 2012. A planning meeting has been scheduled for early January with the AIM Institute and UNL video staff.

Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EDAS). Providing technical assistance to local business leaders on supporting entrepreneurs through the use of broadband technologies. Broadband access, adoption and usage are critical applications for Nebraska entrepreneurs to increase market availability. Using technology to create a share of the market base is a new way of doing economic development. Technology applications will provide a tool for local services and suppliers to access the world market allowing for global expansion of access to clients and customers. A part of the EDAS focus will be used to address how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the State. This project has the potential to be a model for other states as they develop entrepreneurs and the impact of broadband.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Status: The 2011 cohort concluded during Quarter 4 2011 with the 2011 Impact Summit. More than 25 mentors were selected for the EAS program; 124 companies and over 550 individuals participated in the 2011 cohort. Participating companies completed the five core workshops led by Gallup in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2011. Companies are also provided one on one support from a Gallup certified mentor and participated in self-paced activities administered online throughout program. Nearly 200 broadband surveys were collected from EAS participants in 2Q 2011 and analysis began in Quarter 4 2011. Recruitment of new mentors and entrepreneurs for the 2012 cohort began in Quarter 4 2011 and continued into Quarter 1 2012. Forty-eight Guides will participate in the 2012 cohort.

Technical Assistance Expertise. The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurism to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Technical assistance needs will be identified throughout data collection and planning process. Technical assistance will begin during 2012 and will be based on opportunities identified by regional groups and steering team.

Broadband Portal Development - Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska and technical assistance materials.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*:   A temporary site has been created to gather information and can be accessed at broadband.nebraska.gov. The project has been delayed numerous times first due to funding and then by significant staffing changes in UNL Ed Media. Work is in full swing and it is anticipated that the portal will be launched in March 2012. Content has been created and is being created to move the launch forward.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional Planning Teams. Regional planning teams will be formed to conduct regional assessments, prioritize opportunities, and develop strategies. Regional coaches will assist planning teams in conducting the development of plans. Each of the regions will hold a regional forum. The forums will be conducted to present broadband mapping and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts. Project partners will work with regional planning teams to host forums to present broadband mapping data and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts. Over 300 individuals participated in the eight regional forums   Of these 300, around 80 initially indicated a willingness to serve on the planning teams. Regional coaches have additional planning members who represent a broad area of interest.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*:
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> The eight extension educators continue to work in their regions. Each of the regions are at varying stages of identifying additional planning team members and beginning to holding meetings. Following are highlights from the regional planning teams:
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> - Educators are using the recently revised Engaging People. Linking the World workbook. The workbook, available at broadband.nebraska.gov, explores how high speed internet is being used across 13 sectors including: leadership, economic development, infrastructure and teleliteracy, adoption & inclusion. The workbook can be downloaded at Nebraska.broadband.gov.
> - At the request of the Southeast and South Central regional planning teams, the assessment quizzes are now available on-line to allow for more input by

regional sector groups. The assessments are currently available at http://go.unl.edu/xf6.

- Regions continue to be at various levels of the planning process. Here are a few highlights from Quarter 3.
  - The Northeast region is exploring the possibility of engaging high school students through conversation/surveys to better understand how youth are using broadband and whether having broadband access will entice them to move to a particular community. This region is also seeking champions in each county to help in engagement.
  - The North Central, Southeast and South Central Regions are using the on-line workbook assessments to gather and engage more people in the conversation around broadband.
  - Beginning in January, the South Central Region is planning to hold conference calls with individuals involved in a particular topic (i.e., economic developers) to provide feedback on the assessments to increase conversation.
  - Western planning team is planning to hold a workshop focused on broadband related topics later in 2012.
- Broadband Conference in November attracted members from planning teams across the State of Nebraska.

Community Planning - North/South Omaha. North and south Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. The AIM Institute will be leading efforts in Omaha to address broadband adoption and utilization.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update: Meetings are tentatively scheduled for January with telecom providers serving North and South Omaha. Preliminary list of partners is identified.

Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities. We will form additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. As part of the planning process, additional data will be collected (identified in the building capacity section) and focus groups will be held. Coaches with specific knowledge of these regional areas will be added to work specifically with these areas to develop plans relevant to their situation regarding broadband adoption and availability.

4th Quarter 2011 Status Update: Tribal representatives attended the broadband conference and information has been shared back to local members. Cultural coach met with local organizations end of December and discussed future dates. The *Engaging People, Linking the World Broadband Planning Workbook* has been translated into Spanish and is available at broadband.nebraska.gov.

Focus Groups. Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates to gain understanding into the barriers

to broadband adoption and utilization from their perspective.   Focus groups will also be held with businesses including farmers and ranchers.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Initial focus groups have been identified. Regional groups will also be identifying potential focus groups (i.e., youth) that may want to use a focus group approach to engage in broadband conversation. In 2012, will begin to hold focus groups at statewide meetings such as the statewide ag conference on February 15-16.

Community Sector Discussions.   Community Sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry**.** The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals.

> *4th Quarter 2011 Status Update*: The community sector discussions will begin later 2012 and conducted by UNL.

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